

# Colleges help students cope with gas prices

## What they say

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president  
Big Sandy  
Community and  
Technical College

"I about died when gas hit \$3 a gallon."

—Sara Workman,  
student

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—Terri Giltner,  
KCTCS

By **ROGER ALFORD**  
Associated Press Writer

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. (AP) — As a commuter student, Sara Workman makes a 60-mile roundtrip each day to and from the Big Sandy Community and Technical College in Prestonsburg, filling her Mustang's gas tank at least twice a week.

"I about died when gas hit \$3 a gallon," the 20-year-old deli worker from Salyersville said Friday while waiting for her next class.

Administrators at community and technical colleges across the state are taking actions to help commuter students cope with high gasoline prices, offering more internet courses, creating car pools, and on some campuses dropping back to four-day class schedules.

"Some of our students were dropping out this semester because of the high gas prices," said George Edwards, president of the Big Sandy college. "We have to do something to help."

What Edwards did was to schedule classes four days a week, instead of five, thereby cutting fuel costs for students, 70 percent of whom rely on financial assistance to go to college.

Terri Giltner, spokeswoman for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, said every campus is considering measures next semester to reduce fuel costs.

"Most are doing a combination of organizing car pools, increasing the number of online courses, exploring alternative course schedules, offering additional classes at many of our off-site campuses," she said.

Giltner said administrators across the state are being encouraged "to explore alternative scheduling to help students keep costs down so that they

can stay in school." She said Henderson and Hazard campuses are offering alternative schedules that reduce the number of days per week students must be in classes.

Maysville and Southeast campuses also are considering altering their schedules in the spring semester.

With gasoline prices high, Giltner said online courses, already popular, have increased dramatically at all community and technical colleges. "We have always had a large percentage of our students enrolled in online courses, way over half of our total student population," she said.

Tasha Butcher, 19, who commutes from Paintsville to the Big Sandy campus, about 30 miles roundtrip, said she looks forward to the four-day schedule.

"The fact that I work and go to school and the gas prices being what they are, I can stand to save some money," said Butcher, a cashier in a convenience store. "It will be great."

Gasoline prices have fallen from 30 to 50 cents a gallon since the spike to \$3 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Most stations in the region were selling regular unleaded for between \$2.50 and \$2.70 a gallon on Friday.

Edwards said community college students in Kentucky are hit hardest by high gasoline prices because the majority commute to classes. He said a survey of students at the Big Sandy campus found overwhelming support for the four-day schedule.

To make up for the lost day, Edwards said classes will meet longer each day. He said he doesn't know how long the four-day schedule will be offered.

"We're going to evaluate it after the spring semester," he said.